Minn. Socialist Workers Party Gets Crucial Disclosure Law Exemption

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ST. PAUL, Minn., Sept. 25—The state Campaign Ethics Commission today granted the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) a partial, but crucial, exemption from the Minnesota campaign disclosure law.

The Trotskyite party had charged in hearings before the comission that it was the target of police and FBI "surveillance and harassment" and that disclosure of its members' names would increase the 'harassment."

Under orders from Washington, FBI agents assigned to Minnesota refused to testify at the hearings, held over a two-month span starting last July.

The commission held that the SWP's 1974 Minnesota Campaign Committee could keep secret names of individual donors or lenders but must disclose the amounts received and expended.

Pursuant to the state's new election reform act, the six-member bipartisan commission that administers the law can protect with exemptions parties and their members if they show that disclosure could expose them to physical coercion."

Commission Director David Norrgard said today the refusal by the FBI and U.S. Postal Service officials to testify on grounds of national security about alleged surveillance and mail interception left the commission "with no evidence to the contrary."

He said its decision was influenced heavily by the charges against the FBI, including references to a 1973 SWP suit filed in New York alleging government terrorism, black listing, bugging, mail tampering, burglary and harassment.

Ed Jurnas, SWP Congressional District (Minneapolis) candidate, said the decision was a "tremendous victory" for civil liberties.